

CHAPTER VIII

BETWEEN FLORENCE AND AVIGNON

"E crescendo in me il fuoco, mirando vedevo nel coatato d' Cristo crocifisso intrare 'l popolo cristiano e lo infedele ; e io paasavo, per deslderlo e affetto d'amore, per lo mezzo di loro ; ed entravo con loro in Cristo dolce Gesft, accompagnata col padre mio santo Domenico, e Giovannl singolare con tutt' quanti i figliuoli miei. f allora mi dava la croce in collo e l'olivo in mano, quaa' come lo voleasi, e cos' diceva che io la porgesse all' uno popolo e all' altro."—St. Catherine, Letter 219 (87).

To one endowed with the prophetic spirit, a sinister sign of the times must have appeared in the creation of cardinals, the second since Gregory's elevation to the pontificate, which took place on December 21 in this year, 1375. Among these nine new princes of the Church were three of the Pope's own kinsmen, including Gerard du Puy, the infamous Abbot of Marmoutier, who was still besieged in the citadel of Perugia. All were French, with the exception of Simone Brossano, the archbishop-elect of Milan, and Pedro de Luna, a young Spanish prelate of noble birth, great learning, and apparently sincere piety, who held a professorship in the University of Montpellier. "Take heed," said Gregory to Pedro de Luna, "lest thy moon suffer eclipse." Yet, judged by what might have seemed the higher standard, the Cardinal of Aragon, as he was called, was the only one of the nine not unworthy of his elevation.

Gregory's choice of cardinals utterly destroyed all hopes in a possible reformation of the Sacred College. To Catherine, who had just returned to Siena when the news reached Italy, it seemed a cruel act of cowardice on the Pope's part, a putting ointment upon a mortifying wound where the steel and the cautery were needed for the life of the patient. So we gather from the first of her letters to Gregory which have been preserved to us, evidently written about the beginning of the following year, 1376, "with desire of seeing you a fruitful tree, planted in the soil of true